Top Secret [redacted]

BOLIVIA: Coup Plotting

Conservative military opponents of interim President Gueiler continue to engage in coup plotting. [redacted]

The most prominent plotter is General Garcia Meza, commandant of the military academy in La Paz and head of the Army during Colonel Natusch's short-lived regime last November. The support of several key regimental commanders in the La Paz area makes Garcia Meza more powerful than the current commanders of the armed forces and the Army, both of whom refuse to discipline him or transfer his supporters. He does not yet appear, however, to have united military backing, especially from important units outside La Paz. [redacted]

The plotters so far are reluctant to move in the absence of public repudiation of Gueiler's administration. They expect that campaigning for the general election scheduled for June will provoke political turmoil or that the election will end in another congressional deadlock. The plotters apparently believe that the civilian government would be blamed for any unrest, and that this would increase the public's tolerance for a military takeover. [redacted]

Although the plotters are concerned about the US reaction to a coup, many believe that Washington would eventually recognize a military government. Some have scoffed at the importance of US recognition, claiming that Brazil and Argentina would give them all the support needed to confer legitimacy. Garcia Meza evidently has sent emissaries to Brazil and several other countries and former President Banzer is in Argentina; both are trying to determine whether these countries would provide political and financial support for a coup. [redacted]

b (1) b (3)

Approved for Release

FEB 2000